

# Yard waste, blue bag programs reworked

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Plastic soda bottles, tree limbs, cracked egg shells and glass may sound like a lot of garbage. But city officials say it all can be recycled.

The city has revamped some of its waste programs to make sure that happens.

"The average person generates 4.5 pounds of trash every day, about 1.5 tons of solid waste per year," said Michael Foote, city sustainability coordinator. "Although the EPA estimates that 75 percent of solid waste is recyclable, only about 30 percent is actually recycled."

The aim is to reduce the flow of solid waste as much as possible. That will save the city — and in turn the taxpayers — money by cutting down the \$60-a-ton tipping fee the county charges the city for dumping garbage in its landfill. It also will help get maximum use out of the landfill.

Here's a rundown of the city's waste programs:

## Yard waste

The city's 15-year-old yard waste program was plagued with misuse. Garbage was in the mix of the neighborhood bins, contaminating yard waste that could have been made into compost. Almost all of the contents of the yard waste bins were thrown into the landfill with other garbage.

But the city will start a new pilot yard waste program this spring with a maximum of 3,000 households participating. People who want to participate and compost their yard waste can sign up for the service and the city will provide a rollout bin for the program.

There also will be a city drop-off site for yard waste to transport the curbside collection and for those who aren't registered in the program, Foote said. It could be located at an unused site near the city's wastewater treatment facility.

The city plans to order 3,000 rollout bins, which will arrive in Gillette in April. So far, 69 people have signed up for the pilot program.

- **Pickup:** Starting in the spring, city crews will pick up yard waste every other week on scheduled trash days. The curbside yard waste service will run April through November.

- **Cost:** It costs \$4.50 a month to participate in the yard waste program. The cost will be added to utility bills.

- **Container:** A 96-gallon rollout bin that the city will provide when people sign up for the service. It's identical to the rollout garbage bins, but it's tan and labeled for yard waste. Of course, only yard waste can go into it.

- **Requirements:** Sign up for the service, pay the fee and roll out your yard waste bin by 7 a.m. on your trash day.

## Blue Bag Recycling

The eight-year-old blue bag program collected 378.15 tons of recyclables in 2009. Even though that's an increase from years past, it's not enough.

The city wants that number to soar. Once it boosts the numbers, some changes are expected and could mimic the yard waste program.

"It's possible," city spokesman Joe Lunne said. "First, we need to get as many people recycling as we can."

There are 1,975 people on the city's old list of blue bag recycling participants. Since the city has asked people to register for the program, new participation numbers are not yet available.

- **Pickup:** Recycling is picked up year-round on the same day as trash. The city recently hired Sander Sanitation to pick up the curbside recycling. It will replace Waste Connections. The new contract with Sander will save the city

about \$2,300 a month, Lunne said.

- **Cost:** It's free. People can pick up starter kits at City Hall or City West. To register, call customer service at 686-5206. Registration makes the program more efficient, Lunne said. Collection crews will have a specific route instead of driving every block in Gillette for recycling pickup.

- **Container type:** Blue bags or clear bags. They can be found at Walmart, Home Depot, Kmart, Hardware Hank, Ace Hardware and Don's Supermarket. People also can take recycling to any one of the four drop-off trailers citywide. The starter kit comes with a blue bin that's handy to hold the blue or clear bags, but is not intended for curbside use.

- **Requirements:** To participate, people must register for the program and have their recycling on the curb by 7 a.m. on trash pickup days. Only recyclables can be put into the blue bags. To see a list of what can be recycled in Gillette, go to [www.gillette-newsrecord.net](http://www.gillette-newsrecord.net) or [www.ci.gillette.wy.us/index.aspx?page=683](http://www.ci.gillette.wy.us/index.aspx?page=683).

#### Here's a list of what you can recycle in the blue bags:

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Phone Books
- Cardboard (must be flattened)
- Aluminum and steel/tin can (rinsed)
- Plastic numbers one and two

## Solid Waste

The city's traditional garbage pickup caters to 9,316 customers in Gillette. City crews collected almost 12,000 tons of trash in 2009.

Lunne said there aren't any changes to the garbage pickup.

- **Pickup:** In the city, trash is picked up five days a week, year-round. To look at the city's trash route log on to <http://www.ci.gillette.wy.us/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=597>.

- **Cost:** For residential customers it costs \$15.75 a month. Commercial customers pay \$67.00 a month, but that's a base rate for one three-yard Dumpster.

- **Container type:** Green rollout or a three-yard Dumpster.

- **Requirements:** Sign up for the service, pay the monthly fee and roll out your garbage bin to the curb by 7 a.m. on the trash collection day. Everything must fit into the Dumpster or rollout bin. If there are big items to throw away, residents can wait until the city's spring cleanup in April or they can take a load to the landfill. City residents get two free dumps a month at the county landfill when they show a utility bill.